



# Off the Sounding Board

By Sheila Miller, Editor

## Abnormal operating expenses

There was an interesting question raised at Tuesday's stray voltage seminar, sponsored by the State Grange.

"Why should a farmer have to pay to solve off-farm stray voltage problems?" was the query of Agway's Stanley A. Weeks, Farm Energy Utilization manager from Tully, New York.

After posing this somewhat controversial idea to the group, Weeks went on to express his sentiments that the financial burden of handling the tingle syndrome on the farm should not rest with the farmer if the source of the problem is off-farm.

We agree, especially after hearing a case testimony presented by Juniata County dairyman Art Zug.

Zug explained how he first experienced the elusive electrical phenomenon after purchasing a 265 acre farm in March 1979. Two years later, and after exorbitant expenses, the dairy farmer quite accidentally solved his stray voltage headache.

Zug related that when he moved his herd of milking cows into his new 60-comfort-stall barn, his cows suddenly became nervous and their 16,500 pound rolling herd average began to slip downwards.

"I hadn't heard of stray voltage back then," recalled Zug. When his cows started turning up with more mastitis, Zug said he blamed his milking system's vacuum regulator.

Three vacuum regulators later, and after much trial and error, Zug said there was no progress and production continued to pitch. His somatic cell count kept skyrocketing and his cows were getting more and more irritable.

About that time, Zug recalled, he began seeing articles appearing in the farm press that made him suspicious that he was a victim of the stray voltage syndrome. He talked to equipment dealers and when voltmeter readings were taken in his barn, Zug's suspicions were confirmed. The meter registered 1V.

By December 1979, Zug was able to move his cows into a new free stall barn. But what he'd hoped to be a solution to his problems turned out to be a transfer.

"When I put my hand into the water bowls in the new barn, I could feel a tingling on the surface of the water," explained Zug. Another reading proved his senses to be accurate — another 1V was registered.

While Zug's somatic cell count climbed from 100,000 to 800,000, the dairy farmer desperately searched for a solution to his stray voltage problem. He drove in 14 ground rods and connected each water bowl to the ground, installed a new breaker panel, and overhauled his entire electrical system. Still no response.

Zug was involuntarily doing his part to curb the overproduction of milk, watching his herd's record drop to 14,000 pounds.

"But, I considered myself lucky when I thought of my one neighbor's dire situation. His milk production had dropped at the same

time mine did, but his was from 16,000 to 8,000 pounds," said Zug.

A new milking parlor was added to the operation. And still the unwelcomed guest was present. So, in another effort to outfox the phantom voltage, Zug established a gridding system in his new parlor which "grounded everything."

A false glimmer of hope must have crossed Zug's face when, after his first milking in the revamped parlor, there was no stray voltage problem. But Zug's rejoicing was shortlived when one week later 1V was recorded on the meter.

"I spent a lot of money to solve a problem just to find it staring me in the face. I called in electricians, grounded everything, made sure my electrical wiring was heavy enough to carry the load, installed a new center pole and transformer — and that cost me about \$5,000," Zug itemized.

Adding in the cost of his production loss over the two years, stray voltage had robbed this dairyman of roughly \$35,000.

After eliminating every possible source on the farm, Zug concluded that his stray voltage problem was wandering onto his property from somewhere else. So he got in touch with his utility company.

The company's engineer planned to try to solve the mystery through process-of-elimination — turning off the power to neighboring properties one by one. But, even before the experiment began, Zug's consistent stray voltage reading in his milk house suddenly dipped to a 0.3V reading. And that's where it stayed.

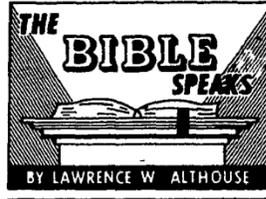
When he called his neighbors to find out if they had done anything different, Zug was shocked and relieved to learn that his neighbor had employed an electrician that weekend to fix a bare electrical wire on his gas pump. The farmer decided the problem was worth fixing after he continued to get shocked each time he touched the silo chute.

So, for two years, damaging stray voltage had traveled a distance of 1½ miles to Zug's farm, creating an uncontrollable nightmare for the young dairyman.

Even though the stray voltage mystery has been solved, it will be at least another year until the dairyman recoups production. Cows, unfortunately, must have some elephant in their blood since they don't seem to forget — but for that matter, who could easily erase those twice-daily shock treatments. And even after the mental anguish has been cured, some of Zug's cows may never recover from the mastitis the stray voltage indirectly caused.

So, who should pay for the damage stray voltage induces? Can we, like the utility companies, pass it off as "normal" operating expenses?

We don't think so.



OUR OWN  
EMMAUS ROAD  
April 18, 1982

Background Scripture:  
Luke 24:13-35.

Devotional Reading:  
Romans 14:1-9

The two men who set out for Emmaus on the first Easter Sunday are men after our own hearts. It is easy for many of us to put ourselves in their sandals: as we walk the seven miles between Jerusalem and Emmaus, we would, as they did, find ourselves deep in conversation about the troubling events of the past week. And, if approached by a stranger along the road, it could be expected that we probably would appear to him, as Luke put it, "looking sad."

Nor would we be less confused by what we had witnessed in Jerusalem. Jesus, the one whom we had assumed was God's Messiah, came to a tragic end on a Roman cross on a hill outside the city. And, if that wasn't enough, some women in our group had utterly confounded us with the assertion that they had seen Jesus alive. We'd like to think that means the women saw the Master, but how can we be sure?

**Him They Didn't See**

How ironic! The two disciples on the road to Emmaus found it difficult to believe the women's testimony because, although they found the tomb empty, "him they did not see." Yet, all the while they are telling the stranger this, they are standing in the presence of their Risen Lord, "But their eyes were kept from recognizing him."

What kept them from seeing him? Is it not likely that they were so wrapped up in their disappointment and confusion that they really didn't recognize him?

And isn't it just as likely that there are times when we fail to recognize the Risen Lord in our own presence because our doubts and fears have dulled our sensitivity?

There was another sense in which they were not seeing clearly. "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" It was because the crucifixion dominated their minds and hearts that they could not see the resurrection. They looked at what had happened to Jesus as a crushing and humiliating defeat for the kingdom of God. But the Risen Christ is challenging them to see his Passion in another light. Instead of concentrating on the human depravity that put Jesus on the cross, he is leading them to focus on the divine love that went to the cross with him and prevailed.

**Their Eyes Were Opened**

Perhaps the scales of doubt and fear had begun to flake away from their eyes. Eventually, as they sat and broke bread with him at the table, something in the way the stranger blessed and broke the bread suddenly revealed him for who he was.

Later, as they marveled over their experience on the way back to Jerusalem, they looked back at what had happened and remembered: "Did not our hearts burn within us while he opened to us the scriptures?" We may not see clearly the features of his face, but if in some experience we sense our hearts burning within us, we can recognize the Risen Christ on our own Emmaus roads.

## OUR READERS WRITE, AND OTHER OPINIONS

### 4 questions, one answer; vote no

Many people have asked me to express my views regarding the upcoming Milk Promotion Referendum. Because of my unique experience of having been involved for nearly 40 years in virtually every aspect of the industry in a decision making position, I believe I can help dairy men decide how best to vote.

First, let me remind all active dairy farmers that they will receive a ballot from the State government early in May. All dairy farmers are eligible to vote regardless if they are members of a cooperative and their cooperative chose to block vote for them. Remember, ballots should be sent in between May 8th and May 22nd, or your vote may not be counted.

Dairy farmers must analyze these four questions as they relate to this program when deciding how to vote. Can dairy farmers afford another deduction — another

added cost? Are milk promotion expenses of packaged milk and dairy products a proper raw product production cost? Will this program improve Class I sales and be beneficial? Should cooperative block voting of their membership be allowed in establishing mandatory milk check deduction programs?

Question 1: Bill Knox, Editor of Hoard's Dairyman, speaking at the Dairy Symposium in Kansas City last month, effectively, pointed to the wrong directions given to dairy men in the mid 70's regarding food shortages. As a consequence, supplies expanded, and now milk prices will tumble drastically in the near future. In addition, a variety of milk check deductions are confronting dairy men today. The National Milk Producers Federation is pushing for a 5 percent hundredweight nation-wide promotion

## NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin

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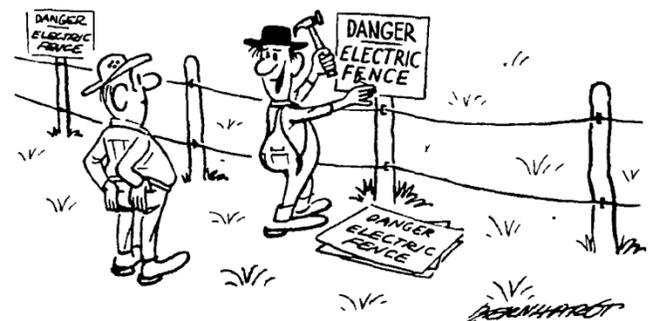
**To Manage Alfalfa Stands**  
With nearly every species of livestock, the feeding of top quality alfalfa hay or silage is highly recommended. At dairy meetings we hear how good alfalfa is in the rations, and at sheep meetings we learn that good alfalfa hay is the backbone of the ewe feeding

program. Alfalfa meal is often used as a source of protein in other rations. It all adds up to the fact that alfalfa is one of our most important forage crops. Every farmer should make a special effort to produce maximum amounts per acre. This takes management along with proper

lime, fertilizer, insect and disease control. Since we are now at the beginning of another cropping season, more attention to alfalfa might benefit many farmers. Don't be satisfied with a poor stand. The crop is worthy of our best attention.

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## HAY HAWS



"It really isn't I just want the cows to think it is."